

From: root@puma.awmach.org@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/23/01 9:30am
Subject: Proposed Microsoft Settlement

What a cop out.

Of my computers, I have one which runs Microsoft 98SE as its operating system. Yet I had to indirectly pay for Microsoft operating system licenses when I bought the others. That has been going on for years.

The courts found them to be a monopoly. As punishment, you are giving them direct access to one of the few markets they don't dominate - schools. What a crock.

My biggest fear as a software developer is that they will decide to put their foot in the door of the market I sell products in. They are trying already, but the experience most of our customers have with their bug ridden security hole dominated O/Ss that you have to reboot every week has kept them from wanting to put Microsoft O/Ss in the remote computer end of it (although it is just about impossible to sell our host products anymore).

Whining that we can't compete? Partially. But our company doesn't have this lucrative arrangement with most of the free world's computer producers that if the free world buys a product from those companies (that we have nothing to do with producing ourselves), the free world has to give us money indirectly anyway - just on the chance that they might use our product someday. What a sweet deal! Now the DOJ is going to roll over and reward that!

Any market that Microsoft wants to go after they can stomp on. Their first entry into the market may be crap, but since they have this unending stream of money coming in - completely unrelated to the product they are going after, they can throw tons of money at any problem, hire or buy up as many companies they need - and eventually after 5 years or so, have some product that isn't completely unreliable. Their programmers have better access to the O/S than any outsider ever will have (which you're also rolling over on) both to suggest features beneficial to their product and to get help in coding for the O/S.

Since they can bundle their crappy products with their buggy O/S products right from the version 1.0 level, it is an extreme disincentive for people to even try out anyone else's products. They spend enough time learning and trying to get the 1.0 level product working that they have a time and frequently a data investment in the product that comes essentially free with the O/S. By that time, they figure that version 2.0 will be available soon, so even if they aren't happy with the product, they aren't going to spend their own money to try out something else. So even if there is a better product out there, it doesn't get a chance 80 % of the time (or higher). By bundling this information into suites (or bundling IE with the O/S as another example) it makes it harder for standalone products to compete.

From the programming standpoint - you have reasonably small companies trying to innovate even on Microsoft O/Ss, that can't keep up with their rapid progression of operating systems with multiple interfaces. To stay approved as being Microsoft logo carriers, you have to stay associated with the latest O/S. Otherwise you can't play. Yet as a small company, you don't have the resources to learn everything that is on the DVD-ROM of new Microsoft avalanches every few months. So, that's another way they win. 3.1, 95, 98, 98SE, NT, ME, 2000, XP, ... - we're a big company with a lot of people working for us - let's change things every year - make sure we only sell the latest O/S on the new computers (pre-installed so people don't have much of a choice), change things enough every couple of years that older products don't work quite right on the new stuff - and make sure that our unending flow of money gets our suites updated to work with the latest so we always have a nice integrated moving target for everyone else to hit. Wherever possible, get our products to pop up first on the list of options - if possible, keep the competitors products from even coming up as an option, and if we get extremely lucky (which seems to happen a lot more often than it should) figure out how the competitors products are working and find out how to disable them (or worse - just make a part of them not work right which leads people to think that the other product is faulty) when we install our own products.

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Well, I've ranted enough. But letting Microsoft off is just plain wrong in the first place, and letting them into the schools (rewarding them for their monopolistic behaviour of the last decades) really stinks.

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